

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8965

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 15179

STADIS//////////

EXDIS

FROM ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHLAUDEMAN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PE, CO, VE, HO, NU, ES, GT, DR, MX, CI, EC

SUBJ: FUTURE OF MILITARY GROUPS

1. IF I UNDERSTAND THE SRG DECISION, WE INTEND TO ASK THE CONGRESS TO APPROVE THE RETENTION OF MILGROUPS IN ALL LA COUNTRIES WHERE THEY NOW EXIST. THIS WOULD SEEM, AS AN INITIAL GESTURE AT LEAST, TO TAKE CARE OF THE PROBLEM OF DISCRIMINATION THAT HAS BOTHERED ARA FROM THE OUTSET -- PARAGUAY AND URUGUAY EXCEPTED, OF COURSE.

2. BUT BY GOING THIS ROUTE WE RISK A GOOD DEAL. IT APPEARS INEVITABLE TO ME THAT THE PROCESS OF SEEKING APPROVAL WILL INVOLVE LITIGATING IN THE CONGRESS THE HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES OF A ANUMBER OF LA GOVERNMENTS. THE RESULT COULD WELL BE APPROVAL FOR SOME AND DENIAL FOR OTHERS. AS ARA HAS TRIED TO EXPLAIN, THE ENDEMIC BORDER DISPUTES AND OTHER RIVALRIES IN LATIN AMERICA ARE SUCH THAT NO COUNTRY WILL SEE THE ELIMINATION OF ITS MILGROUP IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES AS OTHER THAN AN ACT OF POLITICAL DISCRIMINATION ON THE PART OF THE UNITED STATES. THIS WILL BE THE OUTCOME EVEN THOUGH A SECURITY ASSISTANCE OFFICE IS ESTABLISHED IN THE EMBASSY AND NO SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE IN SERVICES AVAILABLE TO THE LOCAL MILITARY TAKES PLACE.

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IN OTHER WORDS, THE SYMBOLISM IS IMPORTANT.

3. ARA SOUGHT TO AVOID THIS PROBLEM BY PROPOSING THE ELIMINATION OF THE "MILGROUP" DESIGNATION IN ALL BUT FOUR SPECIAL CASES, THUS ELIMINATING THE NEED FOR SPECIFIC COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL. I KNOW OF NO COUNTRY OUTSIDE THOSE FOUR WHERE A SIX-MAN UNIT IN THE EMBASSY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ENTIRELY ADEQUATE TO MAINTAIN THE EXISTING MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS AND TO SERVICE OUR DECLINING SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. (I FULLY SUPPORT THE DECISION TO SEEK LEGISLATION INCREASING THE MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE FOR THESE UNITS FROM THREE TO SIX.)

4. AS FOR STAFFING LEVELS UNDER THE SRG DECISION (PARA 6 REFTTEL), SIX-NUMBER MILGROUPS SHOULD BE ADEQUATE IN PERU, COLOMBIA AND CENTRAL AMERICA. THREE-MEMBER MILGROUPS SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT IN VENEZUELA AND CHILE (WHERE SEVERE CONGRESSIONAL RESTRICTIONS APPLY) AND IN ECUADOR AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.  
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